

VZCZCXRO4261
RR RUEHMA RUEHPA
DE RUEHDK #0080 0211642
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 211642Z JAN 10
FM AMEMBASSY DAKAR
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3652
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS DAKAR 000080

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/W, AF/RSA, DRL, INR/AA
PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINS](#) [KDEM](#) [ECON](#) [SG](#)

SUBJECT: Senegal: Wade seeks to undermine local governments

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: On January 18, President Abdoulaye Wade characterized Senegal's decentralization process as a failure after which he outlined a slew of reforms among which he wants to eliminate the positions of Governors and create local legislative assemblies with clearly delineated jurisdictions. Opposition leaders judge this as a ploy to undo the results of the March 2009 local elections that gave victory to the opposition in most of the major cities of the country. END SUMMARY.

Ministers will replace Governors

¶2. (SBU) Senegal has 14 administrative regions each headed by a Governor who are appointed by the Head of State and must be top ranked civil servants who have spent their entire career in administrative affairs. They represent the Head of State and the cabinet in their administrative regions and as such are the chiefs of all local civil servants in their areas and are responsible for law and order. As civil servants, they are non partisan and enjoy a fair degree of independence under the law. Wade's proposal is to replace governors with Resident Ministers, i.e. partisan political leaders. This could have a tremendous impact on the organization of elections as Resident Ministers will be more inclined to choose partisan staff to man polling stations and bend the rules to help the ruling party win. In all likelihood they would also favor their party in local social, economic and security decisions they might make.

Emasculate opposition mayors

¶3. (SBU) In addition to appointed Resident Ministers, Wade said that each region will also have an elected President and an elected assembly that will replace current regional councils he deems inefficient. If passed by the National Assembly, this reform will represent a serious challenge for opposition mayors who will have to contend with multiple political decision-making centers. A hostile regional assembly could also use its legislative powers to tie the hands of a mayor. Limited resources available to a region, if shared among three local government entities, will increase their dependence vis-à-vis subsidies from the central government. Mayors of larger and richer cities like Dakar could see their status decline and thus give them less to present to the electorate as their achievements. This reform would also provide Wade's party with the opportunity to give jobs to a larger number of leaders in his coalition. For the main opposition Socialist Party these reforms have all been concocted to, "create a legal framework to confiscate land and take away power from duly elected mayors." Opposition leaders see this project as dangerous for both political stability and national cohesion as it could lead to ethnic and regional identities becoming divisive defining factors at the expense of Senegal's impressive national identity.

¶4. (SBU) COMMENT: By proposing these new political entities President Wade hopes to increase his ability to dole out patronage and increase competition within the opposition Benno coalition in the hopes of undermining their unity. This project could also serve as a political offer to the Casamance without appearing to have

capitulated before the secessionists of the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC) whose central demand has always been more say in the management of the affairs of their region.

BERNICAT